

# CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by

THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE

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## Meeting of the Roman Catholic Bishops in the Northern Countries.

Last month the Roman Catholic Bishops in the Northern Countries met for a conference at Bergen (Norway). Besides 7 Bishops the newly appointed Apostolic Delegate for Scandinavia, the Archbishop Martin Lucas, also took part in the meeting. The Bishops discussed a number of common problems in connection with private confession, administration, and school education.

In an interview with a staff member of the religious daily paper in Bergen "Dagen", the Roman Catholic Bishop in Denmark, Bishop Th. Suhr, said: "We have entered upon the ecumenical age. The churches are more in touch with one another than before and we have realized the disaster of the churches being divided. It is our duty to do our best to show good will, to try to understand the thoughts of others, and to emphasize what is common to us all. And then we must hope that unity may one day come back in a manner which we cannot visualize today."

## DENMARK

### Papal Infallibility and Ecumenicity.

The Roman Catholic periodical "Catholica", published in Denmark, recently brought an interesting article dealing with the further development of the dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope and its consequent importance in relation to the unity of the Christians.

The article reasserts that the Roman Catholic Church cannot give up any of her once defined verities of Faith, including the dogma of Papal Infallibility. But just as the formulation of the dogmas is the result of a dogmatic development, so they are subject to a further development which may put them in a new and unexpected light. The article goes on:

"The doctrine of the Vatican Council about the Infallibility of the Pope must, of course, stand as hitherto - but if a new Council should carry theology a step further in the understanding of the organic connection between the office of teaching and the whole structure of the Church, of the relation between holders of office and lay members of the Church (in as much as the laity cannot, either, remain 'passive' with regard to the Infallibility of the Church), of the relation of the Pope to the Bishops, of the difference and resemblance







between the ordinary doctrinal authority of the Church and the extraordinary authority of the definitions of a Pope or the decrees of an ordinary General Council of the Church: if such a development and further deliberations on the incomplete doctrines of the Vatican Council should take place, it might mean a further development, or at least a new perspective, of the doctrine about the Pope and his authority: and this might very well result in a perspective which might prove reconciling rather than repulsive to other confessions. In this respect the coming Council may come to mean, also from a purely theological point of view, a preparation of the Roman Catholic Church for unity among the Christians."

#### Dissociation from Suggestion for Free Church Union.

Two prominent men within the Methodist Church and the Danish Baptist Union have clearly stated their disagreement with the suggestion for a union of Free Churches which was advanced last summer by the Methodist minister, Rev. Poul-Erik Bjerno, Esbjerg (CN No. 51). The most recent issue of the organ of the Danish Ecumenical Council, the "Økumeniske Nyheder", contains an article on the matter and comments by various people.

A representative of the Mission Covenant Church of Denmark feels that the suggestion is an attempt to show the way to further co-operation among the Free Churches and would like a discussion on the matter.

Head of the Preachers' College of the Baptist Union, Dr. Johs. Nørgård, turns down the suggestion completely, pointing to various instances of Free Church co-operation already in existence, and does not feel it necessary to go to South India in order to find a pattern for a union of the Free Churches in Denmark. "It is no more possible to make a church than to make a god, the result always being a human mess", Dr. Nørgård writes.

A prominent Methodist minister, Rev. Erik Kristoffersen, feels that such a step in the direction of a union of Free Churches would be contrary to the spirit of the Methodist Church, and that membership of such a union would necessitate a breach with the world-wide Church to which one belongs. He, furthermore, regards a union of such diverging components as the Free Churches as Utopian and concludes by saying that he has not yet met one Methodist member who is in favour of a Free Church union like the one suggested.

#### Teachers Must Not Influence Pupils in Atheistic Direction.

Dr. Stephan Hurwitz, LL. D., Danish Parliamentary Commissioner for the Judiciary and the Civil Administration, has declared that teachers who have resigned from the Danish Lutheran National Church must not actively propagate their views among the pupils, whether in school or outside.

The opinion of the Commissioner was asked by a teacher who complained about this restriction being imposed by the Ministry of Education on teachers who had resigned from the Lutheran National Church. The Commissioner finds such restriction quite justified, referring to the objects clause of the Danish public school in which it says that the school "should develop and strengthen the children's feelings for ethical and Christian values". At the same time the Commissioner states







that probably no curtailment of freedom of expression in speech or writing can be imposed on teachers if they do not direct themselves especially to the students of a school, nor in connection with an otherwise lawful activity in associations or similar places outside the student orbit.

#### Demand for Secular School.

The newly founded "Humanistic Union" in Denmark, counting some 200 members, has issued a declaration in which the secularization of the public school is demanded. The declaration reads as follows:

"Although formally there is freedom of religion in this country the various conceptions of life do not enjoy equal status. In Church and School the State favours a certain religious outlook on life. In our opinion the civic and religious functions should be separated and the public school be made secular.

The future facing us renders it necessary to realize that Christianity is not at all the only foundation on which a society and a code of ethics may be built. To the same extent as large parts of the world with no Christian background or tradition obtain political independence and equality, to the same extent it is necessary to understand that a human ethical code may equally well develop in non-Christian as in Christian cultural circles."

#### 2,100 People on Church Excursion in Copenhagen.

On Great Prayer Day (public holiday falling on the fourth Friday after Easter) the Copenhagen Church Foundation, which has erected more than 50 churches in Copenhagen and environs, arranged one of the biggest excursions yet in the Capital. In 64 busses 2,100 members of the Copenhagen congregations drove to three churches or sites where churches are under construction. The very successful event closed with divine services in the Trinitatis Church and the Cathedral at which, among others, the Minister of Church Affairs, Mrs. Bodil Koch, spoke.

#### Housewives' Leagues on Importance of Religious Instruction.

At the national assembly of the Danish Housewives' Leagues last month a resolution was passed in which was expressed regret that the guide for instruction, published recently by the Curriculum Committee of the Ministry of Education, advocates a reduction of the number of hours in religion in the public school. The Housewives' Leagues maintain that instruction in Christianity is of vital importance to the Danish nation as the homes cannot do without the help of the school in bringing up the children in the Christian faith. The Minister of Education is requested to see that the subject is given the attention and the scope in school which corresponds to its purpose and importance.

#### News in Brief:

- The Danish Baptist Union has introduced a new hymn-book containing 700 hymns, 250 of which are new ones. About 90 of the hymns are written by Baptist, while the majority belongs to the common religious treasure store of hymns. The hymn-writer most often represented in the hymn-book is the Danish Lutheran author, N.F.S. Grundtvig, with 125 hymns.







- A well-known member of the Grundtvigian folk high school movement, Mrs. Margrethe Christiansen, widow of the late head of Hillerød Folk High School, Mr. C.P.O. Christiansen, has accepted an invitation by the Lutheran Church in Alsace-Lorraine to assist in the establishment of an evangelical academy at Liebfrauenberg near Strasbourg. The invitation was forwarded by The Lutheran World Federation.

- The plan for a joint centre with a certain amount of common office facilities for all foreign mission societies in Denmark (CN No. 54 and No. 55) has been shelved for the time being. The committee set up by the Danish Missionary Council to deal with the matter has come to the conclusion that it is not possible at the moment to carry out the plan.

- The Danish Free Church Council has suggested to the selection committee of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation that, besides the daily liturgical devotions at 8:30 a.m. from the Cathedral of Copenhagen on Programme I, there should also be a devotional service with a short sermon at 6 or 6:15 a.m. on Programme II.

- Mr. John Qvist, Århus, has been elected European Regional Leader of the Y's Men's Clubs in succession to the Swede Göran Belin, Huskvarna. The Y's Men's Clubs form the organization for old Y.M.C.A. members.

## FINLAND

### Church Activities among Finns in Sweden Organized.

Since the last World War there has been a considerable emigration from Finland. Thus almost 85,000 Finns have settled in Sweden since 1945, and the spiritual care of these people has caused great difficulties since they live so far apart. Until now regular congregational work has only been possible in Stockholm, where there is one independent Finnish congregation, and in Gothenburg, where a Finnish clergyman has been specially appointed.

For some time now, however, the work has been considerably extended, as the Lutheran National Church of Finland has taken steps to establish Finnish-speaking congregational circles within the Swedish congregations in 6 Finnish settlement centres in Sweden. The idea is not to isolate the Finns from the rest of the local congregation, but, quite on the contrary, to bind them closer as a self-acknowledged part of the congregation. The activities of the circles are in charge of a committee, the members of which are elected for two years at a time. Representatives of the respective local congregations have been favourably inclined towards the Finnish plans.

### The Possibilities of Theatre and Church.

The Church and theatre in Finland have been far apart, but in recent times a certain drawing closer to each other has been noticeable. The Church is beginning to realize that the theatre is able to display the depths of human existence and expose modern man behind his various masks. Many Finnish theatre houses have put on plays, the aims of which come close to those of the Church.

The views expressed by Mr. Irja Kilpeläinen, M.A., about the relation between church and theatre have caused some attention in church circles. He said, among other things:







"It is unnatural to set up church and theatre against each other as if there should be a choice between them. Nobody has suggested, either, that church services should be discontinued and replaced by theatre performances, or vice versa. Church and theatre both belong in the life of the same man. The revivalist movements in the Church of inland originated in the country and were unsympathetic towards the theatre. But really good play-acting is also rare in the country. Now certain tension is evident between believing parents in the country and their children in bigger towns where they have become acquainted with fine art. The theatre must be criticized, and is being criticized, just as we criticize films and literature. We cannot save our young people by keeping them away from certain aspects of cultural life, but rather should we teach them to exert a healthy judgement, to choose the good and reject the poor."

#### News in Brief:

So far the "Share Your Meal with A Refugee"-collection conducted by the Y.W.C.A. in Finland has brought in some 350,000 Finnish marks. The collection continues.

The "Grand Old Man" of Finnish sacred music, Professor Ilmari Rohrn, has died, 92 years old. He was one of the pioneers of musicology in Finland.

### ICELAND

#### Plans for Retreat Centre at Skálholt.

The Cathedral at Skálholt, the foundation-stone of which was laid in 1956 on the occasion of the 900 years' anniversary of the appointment of the first Bishop of Iceland, is expected to be ready for dedication during the summer of 1961. At present Skálholt is parish-of-cess to the parish of Torfastadir, but the plan is to build a rectory at Skálholt. It is planned at the same time to erect a secondary school and to set up a retreat centre for people who need rest or want quiet for studies.

#### Pentecostal Movement in Reykjavik Builds Church for 1,000 People.

The Pentecostal Movement is the biggest Free Church community on Iceland with 500 members, 300 of whom live in Reykjavik. At the moment the Movement is putting up a church in the Capital which, being able to seat 1,000 people, will be larger than the Lutheran Cathedral.

### NORWAY

#### Dr. Birkeli on the World Council of Churches.

At the national meeting of the "Clergymen's Association for Bible and Confession" at Stjørdal the Secretary General of the Norwegian Missionary Society, Dr. Fr. Birkeli, spoke on the ecumenical movement. According to the report in the religious daily paper in Oslo "Vårt Land" he said, among other things, that he much regretted the intended integration between the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches. He expressed great misgivings about several aspects of the World Council of Churches which had become an organization that might pave the way for a "super church".







The day may come when it may be necessary for the Norwegian Church to resign from the World Council of Churches", Dr. Birkeli said, "although I do not believe that it has come yet. We have been given a task in the World Council of Churches which is not yet finished."

Referring to the position of the Norwegian Missionary Council in the present situation Dr. Birkeli said that the Council will probably resign from the World Council of Churches and that the Norwegian foreign mission societies individually will continue the international co-operation on the mission fields.

### Change of Spiritual Course.

"The attitude of ordinary people towards Church and Christianity is far more positive to-day than 30 years ago", Mr. Arne Fjelberg, Director of the practical department of the Theological Faculty of the University of Oslo, wrote recently in a leading article in the "Morgenposten". Illustrating his point he mentioned the fact that while it was very unusual at that time for a young man of normal intelligence to want to become a clergyman, it seems quite natural to-day. There is nothing peculiar in wanting to serve in the Church.

The Oslo Inner Mission weekly "Vår Kirke" agrees with Mr. Fjelberg and as a characteristic example of the change of course mentions the attitude of the Norwegian Union of Students. A few decades ago the members only shrugged their shoulders indulgently or laughed derisively at Christianity, while the attitude of the management and the feelings of the audience at discussion meetings nowadays are quite different. Debates on conceptions of life clearly arouse the greatest interest and several times in the last few years theologians have been elected Presidents.

"We are living in a time of visitation offering great possibilities", the paper writes. "May the Church be able to meet the need and respond to the openness facing us to-day."

### Norwegian Parishes Invite Students from Younger Churches.

Through the Norwegian Missionary Society the parish congregation of Røa near Oslo has invited a young African to a twelve months' stay in Norway in order to study, among other things, Norwegian social and congregational life. Two homes in the parish, having young people themselves, have invited the African, who will probably be a young man from Tanganyika, to stay with them for six months in turn, the necessary means for his stay having been collected among the parish members. In this way one wishes partly to help one of the Younger Churches where qualified people are needed, partly to stimulate the life of the congregation itself by a personal contact with one of the Younger Churches.

Two other parishes in Oslo, Ris and Ullern, have likewise invited a young Chinese, who is in America at the moment, to a twelve months' stay during which time he wants to learn Norwegian in order to be able to translate Scandinavian literature into Chinese.

### Any Use for "Part-Time" Missionaries?

At the young people's mission conference at Stjørdal (Norway) recently the question was raised whether the underdeveloped countries had any use for architects, engineers, technicians, teachers, or others with a higher education who besides doing an ordinary job might preach the gospel. Dr. Fr. Birkeli, Secretary-General of the Norwegian Mis-







ionary Society, promised that competent members of the missionary circles would immediately take the matter up for consideration in order to find an outlet for the special kind of calling expressed by the question.

The religious paper in Bergen "Dagen" heartily approves of such a possible new enterprise in mission work and calls to mind the fact that many of the great missionaries of New Testament times were just such part-time missionaries who, while tending to their ordinary occupation in civil life, at the same time preached the gospel.

#### One Million Visitors to Mission Exhibition.

The exhibition "To the Ends of the Earth", arranged by the Norwegian Missionary Society, has now been dismantled after having been on show for 12 years in 200 different places in Norway and having been seen by one million people.

The Missionary Society is planning another exhibition in the autumn which is to be concentrated around one particular region in Africa. The exhibition is to be called "Africa Calling", and all modern technical exhibition aids will be employed in the building up of the exhibition.

#### Religious Joint Events for Young People at Ålesund.

Ten religious youth associations, representing the Lutheran National as well as the Free Churches, in the Norwegian town of Ålesund have decided to join in a common effort. The new Board will be made up of one representative of each of the associations. The purpose is to win young people for Christ rather than for a particular community and to be an encouragement and blessing to the young people themselves. The joint events, planned to take place once a month or so, will not hamper the usual activities of the various associations.

#### Camps for Candidates for Confirmation Instead of Ordinary Instruction?

The Norwegian Bishops are contemplating the possibility of giving certain Christian youth organizations permission to conduct camps at which boys and girls, who might prefer this, could be prepared for confirmation instead of attending the ordinary instruction for confirmation in the congregation to which they belong. Such an arrangement has been possible for many years in Sweden and Finland, but not in Denmark and Norway.

The question was raised by the Girl Guides' and Boy Scouts' Union and the Christian Young People's Union of Norway, and the Bishops' Conference consequently set up a committee to deal with the matter. In its report the committee expresses some doubt as to loosening the ties with the local congregations, but, on the other hand, it also emphasizes the practical advantages of and the possibilities for greater efficiency deriving from the candidates and the minister living side by side in a camp.

The Bishops have not yet decided on the matter, but will take it up for renewed consideration next year.





News in Brief:

- A hymn-book in the Lappish language, spoken by the Lapps in North Norway, has now been authorized by the Ministry of Church Affairs which in 1950 set up a committee for this purpose. The new hymn-book is the first in Lappish to be officially authorized and contains 561 hymns, of which 250 are given in a new translation. Bishop Alf Wiig was the chairman of the committee.
- Bishop Karl Marthinussen, Stavanger, and Bishop Arne Fjellbu, Trondheim, will be 70 in November and December this year respectively, thus reaching retiring age.

## SWEDEN

Swedish Missionary Council Accepts Integration.

By a majority resolution the Swedish Missionary Council has decided to accept integration between the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council. Eight of the nineteen member organizations by way of reservation expressed their opinion that they found "disquieting tendencies in the ecumenical world movement with regard to its aim and theology". Yet the unity will be maintained in the Swedish Missionary Council by a unanimous decision that only representatives of those organizations that have accepted integration shall take part in the dealing with the questions concerning the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism while other questions will be dealt with in the whole Council. - Among the member organizations which could not accept integration were the Pentecostal Movement, the Swedish Baptist Church and the Evangelical National Missionary Society.

No Fourth Woman Pastor for the Time Being.

Mrs. Brita Olén-van Zilj who had been permitted by the Cathedral Chapter at Lund (CN No. 57) to take Holy Orders will not be ordained for some time. At the time of permission the See of Lund was vacant and none of the other Bishops who were approached wished to ordain a woman who was to serve in another diocese. Bishop Martin Lindström, who was appointed to the See in April, is willing to ordain women in principle, but has not yet decided whether he wants to ordain Mrs. Olén-van Zilj. The consecration of the new Bishop will not take place until some time in the autumn and Mrs. Olén-van Zilj is shortly to return to South Africa where her husband is a minister. Replying to the Press, Mrs. Olén-van Zilj says that she will renew her application for ordination when she next comes back to Sweden.

The request by the Lower House of the Canterbury Convocation last month to the Archbishop to set up a committee to go into the matter of the connection between the Anglican and the Swedish Churches, and the decision of the York Convocation to set up a similar committee, has caused attention in Sweden. The Press has also noted that the Archbishop of Canterbury was present at the 250 years' anniversary celebrations of the Swedish church in London on June 19th. The Archbishop had emphasized at the Convocation that this participation must not be regarded as an approval of the regretful ordination of women pastors in the Swedish Lutheran National Church.





A public opinion survey has revealed, by the way, that no more people in favour of women pastors have been added from 1957 to 1960, the figures in both surveys being 60%. While there were 33% against the ordination of women in 1957, the figure had gone down to 19% in 1960.

In publishing the figures the "Svensk Pastoraltidskrift", organ of "Kyrklig Samling", expresses gratification that no more have succumbed to the Press campaign during the last few years, and the paper feels, moreover, that an opinion poll among actual churchpeople, i.e. people who read the Word of God daily and go to church on Sundays, would result in quite different figures.

### The Policy of Apartheid and the Lutheran Church Union in South Africa.

In an official statement the Swedish Church Mission Board have dissociated themselves from any kind of racial discrimination as being unjust and contrary to the manifest will of God.

A similar rejection was contained in the call to prayer by Archbishop Gunnar Hultgren on the Day of Intercession for South Africa of the Swedish Church which was observed in all Swedish churches on Sunday, May 29th, and at which a considerable sum was collected for the Zulu Church, a result of Swedish missionary work.

In this connection the weekly "Vår Kyrka", published by the Home Mission Board of the Church of Sweden, raises the question whether the Zulu Church of Swedish foreign mission origin will find itself in good company if it, as planned, should join in a Lutheran Church Union in South Africa in which the "German" Zulu Church, which is neutral towards or actively in favour of the Apartheid policy, will play a big part.

### The Swedish Ecumenical Council Recommends Ecumenical "Round-the-Clock" Service.

The Swedish Ecumenical Council has expressed the wish that the church counselling and assistance service, established in many bigger towns over the telephone on the number for "help", should be run on an ecumenical basis. It is advocated primarily that representatives of the Lutheran National and the Free Churches take turns at being "on duty" and answering all calls. Only where this is difficult to arrange should one resort to the policy of asking the caller if he wants to speak to a minister from the Lutheran National or one of the Free Churches. The statement emphasizes the far greater importance of a person's human qualifications for the "round-the-clock" counselling service than of his church membership.

### Caution against Too Much "Institutionalism" in the Free Churches.

In an article in the "Svenska Dagbladet" the head of the Free Church Study Union, Mr. Herman Holmgren, warns against the increasing organization of activities in the Swedish Free Church communities. 'Extensive employment of institutions and detailed organization may fool us into believing that the gospel is running smoothly', he says.

With regard to the present church building activity in the Free Churches Mr. Holmgren is afraid that more attention is being paid to architectural and aesthetic appearances than to the greater importance of the Message and the preaching. He also feels the danger of putting stress on outwards signs of the position of a minister. In opposition







to this he emphasizes the far more vital importance of the individual being confronted with Christ, and that a new spiritual revival is what is needed. "The power of the gospel to change a person and the intimate nature of religious fellowship is pushed into the background by too great an emphasis on organizational forms and institutional enterprises."

#### Plan for High School without Christianity.

A Government proposal for a new kind of "practical high school" has been drawn up by Dr. Stellan Arvidson. The most important subject is called "Knowledge of Organization and Labour", and much time is to be spent on psychology, civics and history.

The cultural periodical of the Free Churches, the "Kristet Forum", draws attention to the fact that the plan contains no subject called "religious instruction", the proposal thus being the first instance of a Government suggestion for a completely secularized school, and this in spite of the study object being said to be human life in all its aspects.

#### News in Brief:

- The Swedish Parliament has rejected a motion to the effect that gifts donated for public utility purposes should be tax-free.
- The prominent revivalist preacher, Mr. John Hedlund, will be the main speaker at the "holiday crusade" in Stockholm of the Swedish Mission Covenant Church which is to be launched on August 20th and go on for 6 weeks. 300 specially trained laymen will assist in the "crusade".
- From September 11th-14th the 26th ordinary Church Conference will take place in Stockholm under the main theme of "The Church in the Age of Powers". Some 3,500 people from various dioceses and congregations as well as many foreign visitors are expected to attend the Conference which has no authority in matters of church politics.

